

11/23/2009 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

November 23, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

Selection Board Interviews Applicants for the U.S. Service Academies

The 2009 First District Service Academy Selection Board met this weekend at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene to interview students applying for admission to the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. The selection board and I met bright young men and women who applied to become the next leaders in our military. The selection board, which is made up of community leaders from across the state, had the difficult challenge of making recommendations to me after reviewing applications and conducting interviews.

Thank you to this year's board members: Kirstin Bangerter and Paula Ripple of Dodge City; Shirley Braxton and Mike Junk of Salina; Consuelo Sandoval and Bill Clifford, M.D. of Garden City; Dr. Edward Berger of Hutchinson; Tom Brown of McPherson; Susan Concannon of Beloit; DeLany Fawkes of Liberal; Ron Lucas of Goodland; Bekki Pribil of Pratt; Kay

Schmidt of Milford; Richard Schwartz of Marion; Rev. Delbert Stanton of Hays; and Ron Whitney of Emporia. Their efforts to make sure students succeed are appreciated.

Urging Fairness in Air Force Tanker Competition

This week, I spoke at a press conference in Washington, D.C., to encourage the Department of Defense (DOD) to account for a recent ruling by the World Trade Organization (WTO). In September, the WTO issued an interim ruling that the European Union (EU) has illegally subsidized the development of Airbus aircraft. Airbus is currently competing for an Air Force contract to build the next generation of refueling tankers.

The aviation industry is an important part of the Kansas economy. If the DOD fails to account for the WTO ruling, Boeing and its workers will be at an unfair disadvantage. I joined a bicameral and bipartisan group of lawmakers to call on the DOD to level the playing field and consider these subsidies when requesting bids for the tanker. [Click here to read more about this issue.](#) [Click here to watch a video of my comments at the press conference.](#)

Demand at Food Banks Increasing

In a few days, families across the nation will gather over a large meal to give thanks. For some, though, the loss of a job, an unexpected illness or other unfortunate circumstance will make it difficult for them to put food on the table. As we approach Thanksgiving, I was pleased to join fellow co-chairs of the House Hunger Caucus, Representatives Jim McGovern (MA) and John Boozman (AR), in testifying before a joint hearing of the House Ways and Means Subcommittees on Oversight and Income Security and Family Support on the increased demand for emergency food assistance.

According to Feeding America, which operates a network of more than 200 food banks nationwide, food banks and pantries across the country have seen a 30 percent increase in demand for emergency food assistance. At the Kansas Food Bank in Wichita, deliveries have increased from 5.5 million pounds of food in 2007 to a projected 7.5 million pounds the food bank expects to deliver by the end of the year. Similarly, local agencies served by Harvesters food bank, located in Kansas City, report a 40 percent increase in the number of people seeking assistance. I encouraged the committee to consider ways to promote charitable giving, particularly by extending a tax deduction for contributions of excess food inventory. [Click here to locate a food bank to contribute to.](#) [Click here to watch my testimony.](#)

House Agriculture Hearing to Review the Financial Stability Improvement Act

The House Agriculture Committee held a hearing on Tuesday to review a draft of the Financial Stability Improvement Act. This legislation was written by Chairman Barney Frank (MA) of the House Financial Services Committee. The general purpose of the legislation is to monitor and control systematic risk in an attempt to prevent market failures like the one that occurred last fall. I voiced my concern that this legislation would lead to decreased availability of credit and higher interest rates in rural and agricultural communities. Rather than get at the root cause of last fall's financial collapse, the Financial Stability Improvement Act creates a duplicative system of regulations and fees that will slow economic recovery. Congress should find ways to increase transparency and accountability without penalizing local community lenders who were not responsible for causing our nation's current financial problems.

Supporting Kansas State Sovereignty

This week, I showed my support for a resolution introduced in the Kansas Legislature by Senator Mary Pilcher Cook. Kansas Senate Concurrent Resolution 1609 emphasizes our state's right to state sovereignty under the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The Tenth Amendment identifies the Constitution's principle of federalism by providing that powers not granted to the national government, nor prohibited to the states by the Constitution, are reserved to the states or the people. Many Kansans are frustrated with the federal government's appetite for increased

reach into their lives and wallets. I share this frustration. With the recent legislation that Congress has passed without my support, I am concerned that we will leave our children with more debt, less freedom, diminished personal responsibility and fewer economic opportunities in the future.

Visiting Ash Grove Cement Company

On my way to Washington, D.C., this week, I visited Ash Grove Cement Company, headquartered in Overland Park. Ash Grove is the nation's sixth largest cement manufacturer and operates cement plants in nine states including one in Chanute. The company's products are used to construct highways, bridges and many other structures necessary for commerce and living.

Thanks to Chairman of the Board Charlie Sunderland, Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Board Kent Sunderland and President Charles Wiedenhoft for visiting with me. Thanks as well to Director of Communications and Public Affairs Jackie Clark for arranging the visit.

Visiting Community Memorial Healthcare in Marysville

Hospitals across Kansas face unique challenges in meeting the health care needs of area residents. To better serve the people of Marshall County, Community Memorial Healthcare (CMH) in Marysville broke ground Tuesday on a \$17.3 million, 25-bed critical access hospital. I visited the hospital on Friday to learn more about the new facility and to speak with CMH physicians, nurses and administrators about the specific health care needs of the community. As Chairman of the Rural Health Care Coalition, I have been advocating for rural hospitals and the patients they serve during the health care debate in Congress. Thank you to CEO and Administrator Curtis Hawkinson for the invitation to visit. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

After meeting with hospital officials and staff, I met with Max Searcey and Marc Degenhardt of First Commerce Bank in Marysville at the hospital to discuss the current regulatory environment and banking legislation now pending in Congress.

Attending Kansas Farm Bureau's Annual Awards Ceremony and Meeting

This week, I joined Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) members at their 91st annual awards banquet and meeting in Manhattan. KFB represents grassroots agriculture and is the state's largest agriculture advocacy organization. I attended the KFB annual awards banquet at the Kansas State University Student Union on Friday night and the KFB annual meeting on Saturday morning. During the meeting, I talked to farmers and ranchers about current issues affecting the agriculture industry such as my opposition to Cap and Trade legislation and the need for the Obama Administration to work towards opening trade markets with other countries. Thank you to President Steve Baccus for his hospitality. [Click here to view photos.](#)

From Washington to Home: Big First Listening Tour Continues

My 13th annual listening tour continues next Monday with stops in Scott and Lane Counties. Every year, I travel to each of the 69 counties in the First Congressional District that I represent to learn about issues important to Kansans. Below are upcoming visits.

Monday, November 30

Scott County Tour Stop, Scott City

Time: 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: I will be walking down Main Street and visiting with residents and businesses

Lane County Tour Stop, Dighton

Time: 1:30 to 2:30 PM

Location: I will be walking down Main Street and visiting with residents and businesses

Residents are invited to attend the town hall meetings to share their thoughts with me on current issues. [Click here to view the listening tour schedule and to see where I have already stopped this year.](#)

In the Office

Doug Hofbauer and Jeff Schipp of Manhattan were in with Frontier Farm Credit to talk about how the Financial Stability Improvement Act could adversely affect the availability of credit for Farm Credit members. Beth Reust, Superintendent of USD 270 in Plainville, was in to visit about educational priorities for rural Kansas schools. Shawn Mitchell of Wakefield was in with the Kansas Community Bankers to discuss legislation to create a new financial services regulator. Mark Schreiber of Topeka was in with Westar Energy to talk about Westar's latest electrical transmission projects and its new energy savings programs.

David Sallee, president of William Jewell College, stopped by to visit about recent developments at the university. Some 8,000 William Jewell graduates live and work in Kansas. Harold Krause of Hays, Dennis Hupe of Lawrence and Bob Henry of Robinson were in with the Kansas Soybean Association to discuss renewal of the biodiesel tax credit. Miriam and Katie Glueck of Leawood were in with AIPAC to update me on issues important to the U.S.-Israel relationship. Shawn and Barbara Keys of Herington were also in to visit.

Phyllis LaShell and Linda Frederick of Hays, Cathy McKinley of Garden City, Linda Miller of La Crosse, Kathy Orear of Emporia, Natalie Fischer of Salina and Amy Beckman of McPherson were in with the Society for Human Resource Management to discuss the needs of Kansas businesses and schools in health care reform and economic development legislation, as well as to receive a tour of the U.S. Capitol. Becky Watson of Wichita, who serves our country in the Office of the Chief of Navy Reserve and is currently stationed at the Pentagon, was also in for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry